

'How's Leboeuf?' inquired his lordship with a grin, as he polished his eye-glass with his dainty silk handkerchief.

'He is dead,' said madame, pursing her lips.

'Oh, indeed. Left you a fortune, I suppose?' remarked his lordship in an off-hand way, as he continued his occupation.

'That is my affair. It is no concern of yours,' said Madame Leboeuf, with startling distinctness.

'Of course not; but I may be permitted to congratulate you, Ernestine?' settling his glass in his eye and flushing up; 'you seem to be in clover here. Leboeuf's luck must have changed indeed if he left you in a position to start a business like this. You are making a fortune, I hear.'

'You did not come here to pay compliments, milor,' said Madame.

'No, Madame. Frankly, I didn't,' said his lordship leaning back in his chair, and regarding her with an odd smile; 'on the other hand, I am the very reverse of unfriendly. Nothing is further from my intention, for instance, than to make known to Lady Blanche or any one else certain little incidents in your career which are within my knowledge.'

'My customers have no concern with my 'private affairs,' said madame, while her dark eyes flashed.

'That is quite true. On the other hand, for your sake I shouldn't like to tell what I know. However,' added his lordship pleasantly, 'as I said before, nothing is further from my intention. To tell the truth, I called to ask a favor.'

'What favor?' inquired madame, slightly relieved, though she feigned supreme indifference.

'A very trifling one. The fact is, I am very much interested in Lady Blanche Dulcimer,' said his lordship.

'Oh! Is that so?' observed madame, glancing at him sharply.

'Yes, that is so?' returned Lord Leytonstone, with a shade of embarrassment; 'her husband was a friend of mine. To come to the point, I want to know the meaning of the mystery.'

'What mystery?'

'Come, you know what I mean—Ernestine! Where does the money come from? She pretends you supply her with fine dresses out of gratitude; but that I flatly decline to believe, having the honor of your acquaintance,' said his lordship, becoming suddenly brisk and matter-of-fact.

'That is my secret. There is nothing to tell,' said madame, rather enigmatically.

'Well, there isn't much, because I'm pretty sure I've guessed it; but I want to make quite certain,' said his lordship.

'Why—what does it matter to you milor?' demanded madam, sinking her voice.

'You were always curious, Ernestine. Supposing I were to whisper in confidence that I contemplate marriage?' said his lordship, stroking his moustache.

'With Lady Blanche.'

'That depends,' returned his lordship, meaningly.

'In that case, everything explains itself,' said Madame Leboeuf; 'how much will you give me if I tell you?'

'Hshaw! you see I have already guessed.'

'You may suspect, but that is nothing; you want to know more; you want figures,' said Madam Leboeuf, with conviction.

'Well—yes; it comes to that after all,' said his lordship, after a thoughtful pause; 'you are quite right, Ernestine; I am in your hands; name your price.'

'A thousand pounds.'

'It is extravagant, but I won't haggle with you Ernestine,' said his lordship; 'I will say a thousand, payable six months after my marriage with Lady Blanche; if it takes place; will that suit you?'

'That will do.'

'Very well, then; it is a bargain.'

'One moment, milor; I will take your note of hand,' said Madame Le-

boeuf, unlocking a drawer at the table and producing a stamped slip of blue paper in a very business-like manner.

'Hullo! Is this a sample of your stock-in-trade, Ernestine?' exclaimed his lordship, laughing, as madame placed the stamped paper, with a pen and ink, enticingly before him.

'Bah! you are not so simple as to believe that ladies only come to me for dresses,' said Madame Leboeuf, contemptuously.

His lordship was tickled by the remark and madame's manner of uttering it, and he paused with the pen in his hand to laugh good humoredly. Then he squared his elbows, and wrote a few lines on the slip of white paper, to which he affixed his lordly signature, while madame looked over his shoulder approvingly.

'Well?' he said, 'presently, after carefully blotting the document and handing it to Madame Leboeuf.'

The same evening Lord Leytonstone proposed to Lady Blanche Dulcimer, and they were married three months later. Everyone was amazed at so prudent a man choosing a wife with no fortune, and who must have been over head and ears in debt to Madame Leboeuf into the bargain; but, then, nobody suspected that Lady Blanche had invested the money she received at her husband's death in starting a fashionable millinery and dressing business. It would, indeed, have caused a sensation had it ever transpired that Madame Leboeuf was simply Lady Blanche's agent.

The little Frenchwoman had the reputation of being the hardest woman of business and the most relentless creditor that could be imagined, while her money-lending transactions were marked by rapacity and unscrupulousness. A nice scandal would have arisen had it become known that Lady Blanche personally directed and supervised all Madame Leboeuf's operations while acting as tout among her unsuspecting friends. But, fortunately for her, no one but her husband had any idea of the truth, and as Madame Leboeuf's business brought in £10,000 a year, he was more than reconciled to his wife's enterprise.

### Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company's



#### TIME TABLE.

##### Steamer Planter,

RATES.....Commander

Will run regularly for Kona and Kau.

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